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9/18/62~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Cuba

September 5, 1962
4:00 p.m.

Subject: Cuban Developments; Possible Informal Meeting of Foreign Ministers

PARTICIPANTS: List of participating Ambassadors is attached.

Departmental Personnel:

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Dean Rusk, Secretary of State

FILE

Edwin M. Martin, Assistant Secretary of State (ARA)

Arturo Morales-Garcia, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (ARA)

Ward P. Allen, Office of Inter-American Regional Political Affairs

John H. Crimmins, Office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs (ARA)

John W. Fisher, Office of Central American and Panamanian Affairs (ARA)

Harvey E. Wallman, Office of East Coast Affairs (ARA)

Herbert B. Thompson, Office of West Coast Affairs (ARA)

Wilber P. Chase, Staff Assistant (ARA)

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Cuba

1. After expressing appreciation for the attendance of the Ambassadors on such short notice, the Secretary initiated a discussion of the Cuban problem by calling attention to the President's statement of September 4, copies of which were before the Ambassadors. He elaborated on the factual information contained in the first three paragraphs, pointing out that on the basis of such verified information as we have so far been able to obtain, the USSR, based on decisions taken some time previously, have materially stepped up their shipment of defensive military hardware, including antiaircraft missiles and ship-to-ship missiles -- both of quite limited range. Apparently it is planned to station the antiaircraft missiles at 10 sites known to us, eight of which are on the northeast coast, one near Havana, and one elsewhere. Much of the equipment, particularly the accompanying radar and electronic guidance mechanisms, is fairly sophisticated and, so far as present information indicates, the number of Russian technicians present or en route is not disproportionate to the number reasonably required to assist in installation and train Cubans in the handling of the equipment.

The Secretary called particular attention to the fourth paragraph of the President's statement as containing a clear warning to the USSR as well as to Castro of the types of possible future action which the US would not tolerate. The fifth paragraph of the statement was intended, said the Secretary, as a

reminder

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SANITIZED EO 12356 Sec. 1.3

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BY PN-5M NARS, DATE 4/13/84

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remainder, partly to the US public, that the Cuban problem cannot be viewed in isolation, but rather within the framework of the cold war. The US has more than a million men overseas helping to defend the free world security and in Berlin and elsewhere there is a major confrontation of forces with the USSR. In reaching any decisions on the Cuban situation, prudence, wisdom and necessity require that we take the larger picture into account. The last paragraph of the President's statement is a renewed pledge of US policy in preventing Castro from employing force against any other part of the hemisphere.

When, after raising the points discussed below, the Secretary invited comment on the foregoing, Ambassador [redacted] asked for an estimate of Soviet intentions or reactions to the US position. The Secretary replied that, although trying to guess Soviet thinking, is always a hazardous exercise, it is our present impression that the USSR does not at present desire to develop Cuba as a Soviet base in this hemisphere. Under considerable pressure from Cuba and to serve their own purposes, they are stepping up their economic and military assistance; but they have so far been extremely careful to avoid making an unlimited security commitment to Castro. The Soviet position could, of course, change, but the present chances are that the USSR is not prepared to be as highly provocative as to take any of the steps indicated in paragraph four of the President's statement.

Ambassador [redacted] characterizing the language of paragraph four as indicated the "maximum limits of tolerance", inquired whether if the USSR should take any of those or similar steps, the US plans for response envisage unilateral action or whether multilateral action would be expected and prior consultation with the other American Republics could be anticipated. The Secretary replied that in such matters the US Government, as well as all other Governments, must necessarily start from the premise that its own elementary national security needs are basic; this is a responsibility which no government can abdicate. On the other hand, the US regards its obligations under the Rio Treaty and other Inter-American instruments as also fundamental and to us hemisphere solidarity is highly important. We would, therefore, certainly expect to consult. Moreover, as the threat would be one to the hemisphere -- to other countries of the hemisphere, we would hope for action on a hemisphere basis. However, he concluded, this does not mean that we would or could abandon the ultimate responsibility which each government has for its own national security.

2. Turning to the problem of Cuban activities in other hemisphere countries, the Secretary indicated that since the Punta del Este Meeting, the U.S., with the help of many of the governments represented here, has been seeking to

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perfect its information on this subject. So far, despite a number of reports and rumors, we do not have properly verified evidence that Cuba is engaged in any substantial smuggling of arms and ammunition into the other Republics. This may in part be due to the fact that this is not necessary. Rather, the principal Cuban effort is taking the form of introducing into the other American Republics considerable amounts of money, and quantities of propaganda together with a systematic campaign of training of students and youth from the other American Republics in Cuba (and through Cuba in the USSR) who are then returned to their own countries for subversive purposes. The US is concerned about these forms of interference and is confident the other Republics are also. In our view we think it would be advisable for the SCOS to look into this matter and to consider what possible steps the various countries might take to interrupt this flow of travel.

Informal Meeting of Foreign Ministers

3. The Secretary then referred to the suggestion made by several Governments in the last few days that it is time for the Foreign Ministers of the American Republics to take a fresh look at the whole Cuban problem as it is developing. He also mentioned recent proposals by several governments that there be a Meeting of Foreign Ministers to consider the problem of governments coming into power as a result of coups d'etat. In the light of these suggestions and in view of the fact that many Foreign Ministers are planning to attend the forthcoming session of the UNCA, the Secretary broached the idea that it might be desirable to hold a short, informal, closed meeting of himself and his colleagues in New York to discuss these two matters and, perhaps, other matters. For example, he stated he would take advantage of the occasion to discuss with his colleagues certain global matters, such as Berlin. He indicated we have in mind a consultation, perhaps following a lunch or dinner, in New York around the end of September or first of October, with no formal agenda, no voting and no resolutions. We would, however, hope to come out with a certain consensus of views on possible steps that might be taken on the problems discussed.

During later discussion of possible discussion topics, Assistant Secretary Martin (following the Secretary's departure) indicated we think the Foreign Ministers might also want to discuss the matter of the postponed II Inter-American Conference, scheduled for Quito, including the possibility of rationalizing and streamlining its overladen agenda. He also mentioned the question of the admission of new members to the OAS, provided our present considerations have progressed sufficiently to warrant it.

The Secretary

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The Secretary suggested that in order to determine the most generally convenient date, it would be desirable to know how many Foreign Ministers are planning to attend the GA and the exact dates of their attendance. In response to a question, the Mexican Ambassador indicated the Mexican Foreign Minister is not planning to attend the GA and is scheduled to leave for a tour of the Far East with the President October 4th. Ambassador Arango (Panama) volunteered the view that it would be highly preferable to hold the meeting in Washington rather than New York. Ambassador Miller (Chile) on the other hand was inclined to favor New York as the site. The Secretary stressed that in suggesting New York, he had in mind only that it would be more convenient, and that no question of principle was involved. He sought to make clear that we are simply broaching the idea of a meeting in order to obtain the views of others; that his remarks should not be construed as an invitation and that he is anxious that the other Foreign Ministers not receive the impression from the press that today's talk constitutes a decision to hold the meeting.

Cuban Internal Situation

4. When the [redacted] Ambassador requested comments on the Cuban internal economic situation the Secretary requested Mr. Martin to discuss it. Mr. Martin in a brief survey of the state of Cuban economy, stated we understand their situation is serious but not desperate. Their crisis is due in part to the disruption of their natural markets and sources of supply, in part because of bureaucratic inefficiency, in part because of their poor sugar crop. There is not much prospect of early improvement. On the other hand, there is so far no hard evidence that an economic breakdown is likely, nor does any serious rebellion against the regime appear in the offing because of the economic situation.

Note: At this point the Secretary excused himself to keep an appointment with the President and asked Mr. Martin to chair the meeting.

NATO Shipping

Ambassador [redacted] pointed out that a large portion of the bloc shipments to Cuba are being carried on the ships of NATO countries. He wondered what the US attitude is toward this problem. Mr. Martin responded that we are, of course, concerned and that we have from time to time been in touch with our NATO allies. There are, however, he pointed out, a number of

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practical factors which operate to limit what can be done. For example, most of the free world shipping used by the USSR is chartered to them under "bare boat charters" - i.e., the Soviet Union hires the ships for a fixed period of time, with no indication of their use and no way for the owners to restrict their use to certain ports or certain cargo. Secondly, shipping is, so to speak, a fungible item in that even if the free world charterers were to deny use of their ships in the Cuba trade, the USSR could shift these ships to other runs and use their own in sending goods to Cuba. In view of the present surplus of shipping, it is out of the question from a practical point of view to try to persuade other countries to deny all shipping to the USSR. Moreover, for some countries, this might not be possible under their constitutions in peacetime.

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LIST OF AMBASSADORS AND OTHER PERSONS REPRESENTING THEIR COUNTRIES
AT THE SECRETARY'S BRIEFING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1962, 4:00 P.M.

	<u>To the United States</u>	<u>On the Council of the OAS</u>
Argentina	Ambassador Alemann	Ambassador Weidmann
Bolivia	Ambassador Andrade	
Brazil	Ambassador Campos	
Chile	Ambassador Muller	Same
Colombia	Dr. Ignacio, Charge	Ambassador Zuleta
Costa Rica	Ambassador Facio	Same
Dom. Rep.	Ambassador Freites	Ambassador Sánchez Cabral
Ecuador	Ambassador Ponce-Miranda	
El Salvador	Ambassador Lima	Same
Guatemala	Ambassador Alejos	Mr. Mérida, First Secretary
Haiti	Ambassador Mars	
Honduras	Ambassador Dávila	Same
Mexico	Ambassador Carrillo Flores	Ambassador Sánchez Gavito
Nicaragua	Dr. Alegria, Minister Counselor	Same
Panama	Ambassador Arango	Same
Paraguay	Ambassador Plate	Same
Peru	Ambassador Berckemeyer	Ambassador de Lavalle
United States		Ambassador Morrison
Uruguay	Mr. Ochoteco, Charge	Dr. Oribe, Minister Counselor
Venezuela	Dr. Pérez de la Cova, Charge	Dr. Jimiob, Minister